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## THE BRIEFCASE

The day had arrived. I was going to try my first case by myself. As any fairly new associate would do, I had gone over my notes, the exhibits, and my arguments the night before. In fact, I even employed a visualization technique I had learned when I was a swimmer, which was to stare at my suit (literally, a suit this time) and visualize trial the next day.

The next morning I mentally went down my check list: briefcase with trial notebook, exhibits, deposition notebook enclosed, special earrings, pens, legal pads, rule book, and current favorite song ready to play on my iPhone for the drive. As I started the car to head to court, little did I know that I was going to have one of the biggest scares of my first few years of practice.

I arrived 45 minutes early as planned with plenty of time to lay out my notebooks, greet my witnesses, pray, and breathe. I pulled out the briefcase to get my folders in order.

One of the partners in the firm had let me borrow his briefcase for trial as I did not have one. He had given me the code to unlock the briefcase, which I had dutifully written down. Anticipating that I may have an issue with unlocking the briefcase, I decided to simply close the clasps and not lock it when putting it in the car that morning.

As I went to open the briefcase, I tried the clasps and it would not open. Shaking my head at myself, I pushed the clasps again wondering why it wouldn't open. Perhaps, I did lock the briefcase. I set the code and attempted to open the briefcase again. Nothing happened. After messing with the briefcase for a few minutes, I decided to call my assistant to confirm the code. Embarrassingly, I spoke with both the owner of the briefcase and my assistant. However, the briefcase still would not open.

My mind was racing. Would I have to ask for a continuance? Would the judge allow that? Would I have to try this case without any exhibits or notes? Would the firm fire me after learning that I was so unprepared? Was this briefcase going to be the end of my legal career?

In the midst of this panic, the hero of the day appeared in the form of the bailiff. Watching my struggle for the past several minutes, he asked if he could be of assistance. I eagerly accepted his offer of help. Together, we again tried to open the briefcase. The first attempt was unsuccessful. To my relief, the bailiff employed a different technique and opened it.

Words cannot express how ecstatic I was. You would have thought I won the trial. Now that the briefcase was open, I set out to do the real work of the day.



### Have a story to share?

Lane McCarty (lanemccarty@gmail.com) is coordinating this monthly column for DICTA. If you can look back and laugh at those moments that made you cringe, we'd love for you to share your story.